

Rialto Businessmen and Constantinople, 1204–61

LOUISE BUENGER ROBBERT

Thirteenth-century Venetian businessmen traveled from the Rialto marketplace in their home city to buy and sell in Constantinople and throughout the eastern Mediterranean. This paper will demonstrate, on the basis of a new analysis of the evidence, that the city of Constantinople and Venetian business within it *declined* during the Latin Empire, 1205–61. Heretofore no one has demonstrated this, although both George I. Bratianu, the Rumanian Byzantinist, in 1929 and Robert L. Wolff, the Harvard historian, in 1947 wondered whether Constantinople might possibly have declined under the Latins.¹ Freddy Thiriet commented that the years 1219 and 1220, marked a turning point in the Latin Empire, when its strength first began to be in doubt.²

Rather, the accepted generalization has been that “probably the Venetians scored the greatest gain . . . [from] the Fourth Crusade,” as Kenneth M. Setton claimed in 1976.³ Donald M. Nicol expanded on the older generalization in 1988:

For fifty-seven years the Doges [of Venice] did not have to worry about protecting the rights of their merchants in Byzantium. The colonial empire of Romania came into existence. A fruitful combination of state and private enterprise added untold wealth to the city of Venice. While it lasted, the Latin Empire of Constantinople was by far the most profitable investment that the Venetians had ever undertaken.⁴

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¹Bratianu remarked in “La question de l’approvisionnement de Constantinople à Constantinople à l’époque byzantine et ottomane,” *Byzantion* 5 (1929), 95, that “the prosperity of the city was closely dependent upon the political power of the empire. When the latter declined, the economic importance of the capital decreased and the commercial affairs collapsed. From this point of view, the conquest of Byzantium by the Crusaders in 1204 and the partition of the empire destroyed the economy of the city in one terrible blow, from which it never recovered until the Ottoman conquest.” Wolff suggested in “The Latin Empire of Constantinople (1204–1261)” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1947), 561–62 (hereafter cited as Wolff, “Latin Empire,” diss.), “Although it cannot be positively proved, it is probable that the trade which was their [Venetian] main concern in Constantinople, had slackened and fallen off as the Latin Empire found its territory so greatly reduced and its enemies so close to the walls of the city. The surviving body of Venetian commercial documents concerning trade with the Levant indicates, during the later years of the Empire, a marked decline in interest in Constantinople.”

²F. Thiriet, *La Romanie vénitienne au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1959), 89.

³K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)*, I (Philadelphia, 1976), 49.

⁴D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice* (Cambridge-New York, 1988), 412–13.

On the contrary, I propose that under the Latins the city of Constantinople did *not* maintain its former commercial strength. It is true that before 1204 taxes and tolls had flowed to the Greek capital; businessmen and artisans had sought to supply the imperial courts with luxuries. Foodstuffs and raw materials had come into Constantinople from fields near the capital and by sea from distant places.⁵ The bureaucracy of the imperial court taxed, controlled, and channeled these imports into the capital city and also encouraged and regulated local crafts within Constantinople.⁶ I propose that with the Latin conquest of 1204 this entire economic structure was shaken and the population of the city probably declined precipitously. Constantinople during the Latin Empire might be compared to Vienna after World War I. The Latin emperors attempted to re-create a court life and Venetian businessmen supported it,⁷ but the civil service and the legal infrastructure of the Greeks was not reinstituted. The distant provinces no longer supported the capital city and the nearer provinces were conquered one by one by the foes of the Latin Empire.⁸ Merchants deserted Constantinople and real estate values declined. The Black Sea granary fell into the hands of the Mongols.⁹ Consequently it would seem rather that the city of Constantinople contracted and became a weak, impoverished shell of its former self. Venetian businessmen did not make much profit in Constantinople during the last four decades of the Latin Empire.

The decline in Venetian business in Constantinople during the Latin Empire will be illustrated in this paper based on evidence in Venetian real estate transactions, in long-distance trade contracts, and in government documents.¹⁰ Before presenting this analysis of the economy, the political background will be recounted briefly.

The precarious position of the city of Constantinople became clear only after the death of the emperor Henry in 1216. The first two Latin emperors, Baldwin of Flanders

⁵As Benjamin of Tudela remarked in the 1170s, "The tribute, which is brought to Constantinople every year from all parts of Greece, consisting of silks, and purple cloths, and gold, fills many towers. These riches and buildings are equalled nowhere in the world. They say that the tribute of the city alone amounts every day to twenty thousand florins, arising from rents of hostelries and bazaars, and from the duties paid by merchants who arrive by sea and by land." Benjamin of Tudela, "The Travels," in *Contemporaries of Marco Polo*, ed. M. Komroff (New York, 1928), 265–66.

⁶H. Antoniadis-Bibicou, *Recherches sur les douanes à Byzance*, Cahiers des annales 20 (Paris, 1963), 49–50, 123–39, 193–216.

⁷D. Jacoby, "The Venetian Presence in the Latin Empire of Constantinople (1204–1261)," *JÖB* 43 (1993), 143, 149, and citations there.

⁸R. L. Wolff, "The Latin Empire of Constantinople, 1204–1261," in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. K. M. Setton, II, ed. R. L. Wolff and H. W. Hazard (Philadelphia, 1962), 199–233 (hereafter cited as Wolff, "Latin Empire," *Crusades* II).

⁹A. R. Lewis, *Nomads and Crusaders, A.D. 1000–1368* (Bloomington, Ind., 1988), 145–47, 155–56.

¹⁰Archivio Storico di Venezia (ASV), *Codice diplomatico veneziano*, XIII secoli (hereafter cited as *Cod. Dip. Ven.*); *Documenti del commercio veneziano nei secoli XI–XIII*, vol. II, Documenti e studi per la storia del commercio e del diritto commerciale italiano 20, ed. R. Morozzo della Rocca and A. Lombardo (Rome-Turin, 1940), (hereafter cited as Mor. II); *Nuovi documenti del commercio veneto dei sec. XI–XIII*, vol. III, ed. A. Lombardo and R. Morozzo della Rocca, Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Venezia (Venice, 1953) (hereafter cited as Mor. III); "Liber Comunis Plegiorum qui nuncupatur 'Plegiorum,'" *Deliberazioni del maggior consiglio di Venezia*, I, ed. R. Cessi, Academia dei Lincei, Atti delle Assemblee Costituzionali Italiane, III.1 (Bologna, 1950) (hereafter cited as Cessi, "Lib. Pleg."); G. L. Fr. Tafel and G. M. Thomas, *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig*, Fontes rerum austriacarum, II Abtheilung, Diplomataria et acta, XII Bd., II Theil (Vienna, 1856) (hereafter cited as T. & T.); and F. Cornaro, *Ecclesiae venetae*, VIII (Venice, 1749) (hereafter cited as Corner, *Eccl. Ven.* VIII).

and his brother Henry, had ruled vigorously in Constantinople from 1204 to 1216. But as early as 1218, according to fourteenth-century Venetian ducal chronicler Andrea Dandolo, the strength of the French in Constantinople had disappeared.¹¹ The succeeding French rulers of Constantinople tried to strengthen the city, but the Latin hold on it became increasingly tenuous. The advances of the Bulgarian tsars and the conquests of the despots of Epirus and of the Greeks of Nicaea reduced the extent of the Latin Empire. All Anatolia was lost to the Latin Empire by 1225. Although Frankish lords of the Aegean owed liege homage to the Latin emperor, they did little to assist him.¹²

By 1230 the Latin Empire was reduced to the city of Constantinople and a few lands along the Bosphorus. Venice, now led by Doge Iacopo Tiepolo, who had twice been *podestà* of the Venetians in Constantinople, made a massive attempt to renew the Latin Empire in 1231 by transporting to Constantinople a new and hopefully stronger Latin emperor, John of Brienne, and an expeditionary force of five hundred knights, twelve hundred horses, and five thousand men-at-arms. Venice guaranteed food for the horses and men for the three months en route and accompanied them with fourteen armed galleys. John of Brienne, in turn, guaranteed the terms of the pacts between Enrico Dandolo and the crusaders, and also guaranteed all previous Venetian rights and privileges in Constantinople by placing 1,000 silver marks with the bishop of Bologna. To legitimize his position in Constantinople, John married his daughter Maria to the boy emperor Baldwin II, and reigned in Constantinople in his own name and in that of his son-in-law until his own death in 1237.¹³

But even John of Brienne could not prevent the further disintegration of the Latin position in Constantinople. By 1233, if not before, Venetian merchants were deserting the markets of Constantinople. In that year, commercial accounts in Constantinople were not settled in the money of account, but only in gold, as the experience of Giovanni Venier, a Venetian in Constantinople, demonstrates. He offered to repay in gold three commenda contracts for Constantinople worth a total of 665 *libre denariorum venetiarum*. The contracts had been drawn up in Venice. The exchange rate at which Venier offered to repay the loans was very unfavorable to his creditors, one of whom, Pangrazio Montanaro, would not accept repayment.¹⁴ The good gold hyperperon, struck by the Comneni and the basis of their money of account, was debased in the later twelfth century, and a gold coin was not struck in the mints of Constantinople during the Latin Empire.¹⁵ These documents of Giovanni Venier show that because the markets had no confidence in the hyperperon in the 1230s, the credit of the Latin Empire was very poor.

¹¹A. Dandolo, *Chronicon*, ed. Pastorello, in Muratori, *RerItalSS* [N.S.] XII, 288.

¹²For details of these wars, see Wolff, "The Latin Empire," *Crusades* II, 199–233; Jacoby, "Venetian Presence," 165.

¹³John, an elderly man, had enjoyed some military success as king of Jerusalem and leader of the papal armies against Frederick II in Sicily. T. & T., 277–98; Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, 54; Wolff, "Latin Empire," *Crusades* II, 216–17.

¹⁴*Cod. Dip. Ven.*, ann. 1232–34, Sept. 1233, Constantinople (2 docs.); and Mor. III, no. 86, Nov. 1223, Rialto. On the Rialto, Giovanni Venier was represented by his father Stefano, his wife Palma, and his brothers Marco and Giacomo.

¹⁵For a discussion of the hyperperon, see L. B. Robbert "Venetian Money Market, 1150–1229," *Studi Veneziani* 13 (1971), 23; eadem, "Monetary Flows: Venice 1150 to 1400," *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds* (Durham, N.C., 1983), 57–59; and eadem, "Sistema monetario a Venezia prima del 1300," in *Storia di Venezia*, II, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, forthcoming.

Non-Venetians witnessed the decline that threatened Constantinople after 1230. In 1234, certain Franciscans, sent to the Levant by Pope Gregory IX, reported the “perilous ills” in Constantinople, including famine and the desertion from the city by its Frankish mercenary troops.¹⁶ In 1241 Gregory lamented over Constantinople:

We cannot behold her penury without grief, or refrain from pitying her dreadful misery. She who was once the most opulent and the preeminent leader of the adjacent provinces, shining with the light of her special privilege, has now, because of the troubled state of the Empire of Constantinople, been sadly and wretchedly brought almost to extreme emptiness, nor is there anyone willing or able to stretch out a hand to her; nay, rather her enemies, foes to God and the Church, have not hesitated to consume her relics.¹⁷

Venice continued to try to sustain Constantinople. She sent fleets to defend the city by sea and patrol the straits of the Bosphorus in 1234–35, 1236, 1240–41, 1256, and 1259.¹⁸ A thirteenth-century Paduan monk testified that only the Venetians defended the city of Constantinople against its enemies “with infinite expense and danger and with the greatest effort.”¹⁹ Similarly, Marin Sanudo Torsello, the learned fourteenth-century Venetian historian and advocate of crusades, complained that the Venetians were “heavily burdened with the greatest expenses” in sustaining the city of Constantinople during the fifty-eight years of Latin domination.²⁰ The last Latin emperor, Baldwin II, was heavily dependent upon the Venetians. In 1261, during the absence of the Venetian fleet, the only defender of Constantinople, a small Greek force sent from Nicaea by Michael VIII Palaeologus was able to take the city.²¹ After the Greeks returned, Nikephoros Gregoras described Constantinople: “the Queen of Cities was a plain of desolation, full of ruins . . . , with houses razed to the ground, and a few <buildings> which had survived the great fire. For raging fire had blackened its beauty and ornamentation on several occasions when the Latins were first trying to enslave <the City>.”²²

The first argument for the economic decline of Constantinople under the Latins will be made from Constantinopolitan Venetian real estate transactions, as revealed in Venetian documents. Under the Latin Empire, real estate holdings were concentrated in, but not limited to, the Venetian quarter, known as the Venetian Embolo, or Narrow Street of the Venetians.²³ Although their commercial privileges in Constantinople were con-

¹⁶Greg. IX, an. XI, ep. 358 (S. P. Lampros, *Eggrapha* [1906], pt. 1, doc. 25, pp. 38–39, as cited in Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, I, 64).

¹⁷L. Auvray, *Les registres de Grégoire IX* (Paris, 1899–1910), II, no. 6035, cited in R. L. Wolff, “Politics in the Latin Patriarchate of Constantinople, 1204–1261,” *DOP* 8 (1954), 290.

¹⁸T. & T. II, 281–88; III, 24–25; Bibl. Marc. Lat. Cl. X. 136 (3026), fols. 34v–35v; Bibl. Museo Correr, Cod. Correr 1120, sotto Giacomo Tiepolo; E. A. Cicogna, *Delle Inscrizione Veneziane*, 6 vols. (Venice, 1824–53), IV, 302–4; Thiriet, *Romanie vénitienne*, 96–97.

¹⁹*Annales Sancta Iustinae Patavini*, ed. P. Jaffé, MGH SS, XIX, 181. But Genoese and Pisans assisted Venetians in 1236, when they defended Constantinople from attacks by the Greeks and the Bulgars.

²⁰*Fragmentum Marini Sanuti Torselli*, ed. Ch. Hopf, *Chroniques gréco-romanes inédites ou peu connues* (Paris, 1873; impression anastatique, Bruxelles, 1966), 171.

²¹Wolff, “The Latin Empire,” *Crusades* II, 229–32.

²²*Nicephori Gregorae byzantina historia*, Bonn ed. (1829), I, 87–88, as quoted in A.-M. Talbot, “The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII,” *DOP* 47 (1993), 249.

²³Corner, *Eccl. Ven.* VIII, 233 n. 2: “*Embolus*, seu *Imbolus*, est *Urbis angiportus*.”

firmed from A.D. 992, the Venetians were first awarded an embolo by Emperor Alexius I Comnenus in his chrysobull of 1082. His grant of this special quarter, was renewed by Byzantine emperors in 1126, 1148, 1187, and 1198.²⁴ It was a prime harbor site on the southwest bank of the Golden Horn. It extended on both sides of the city wall, from the Watch Gate (Porta Vigla) southeast to the Porta Ebraica (also known as Porta Peramatis) and the Porta San Marco. After additions granted by Emperor Manuel in 1148, it measured approximately one-third mile in length and five hundred ten feet in width.²⁵ It included three port facilities, shops, wooden and stone buildings, and four churches of the Latin rite: San Akindynos,²⁶ San Marco of the Embolo,²⁷ Santa Maria of the Embolo,²⁸ and San Nicolò of the Embolo.²⁹

The Embolo continued to the center of Venetian interests in the city during the Latin Empire. The Venetian holdings in Constantinople increased after 1205, when Venice gained its three-eighths of the Byzantine Empire, according to treaty. The additions included the great basilica of Santa Sophia, the church of the Holy Apostles, and the monasteries of Christos Pantepoptes and the Peribleptos.³⁰ In February 1207, Marino Zeno, the first Venetian *podestà* of Constantinople, at the order of the doge, recognized the authority of the patriarch of Grado over the lands, landing places, and the churches in the Embolo.³¹ Three years after the Fourth Crusade, Zeno constructed a new wall with a castle for the Embolo.³² Doge Pietro Ziani confirmed to the Venetian Benedictine monas-

²⁴The chrysobull of the Byzantine emperor Basil II guaranteed trading rights to Venetian businessmen in Constantinople and elsewhere in Romania, but it did not give them an embolo. T. & T. I, 36–39; for 1082, *ibid.*, 43–45, 113–24, 179–95, 246–78; the newest edition of *I Trattati con Bisanzio, 992–1198*, ed. M. Pozza and G. Ravagnani (Venice, 1993), *passim*. See also, L. B. Robbert, “Venice and the Crusades,” in *The Crusades*, V, ed. K. M. Setton (Madison, Wisc., 1985), 384–89; Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 60–61; Thiriet, *La Romanie vénitienne*, 34–42, 53–61.

²⁵H. F. Brown, “The Venetians and the Venetian Quarter in Constantinople to the Close of the Twelfth Century,” *JHS* 40 (1920), 73–80, with map; R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l’Empire byzantin*, III: *Les églises et les monastères* (Paris, 1969), 44–45, 514, and map.

²⁶Mor. II, no. 470, March 1205; and Mor. II, no. 502, September 1208; R. Janin, “Les sanctuaires des colonies latins à Constantinople,” *REB* 4 (1946), 166–67.

²⁷“S. Marco de embolo venetarum,” Mar. II, no. 492; Corner, *Eccl. Ven.* VIII, 245–46; also *Cod. Dip. Ven.*, ann. 1242–45, Oct. 1244. See Janin, “Les sanctuaires des colonies latins,” 167–69.

²⁸Also known as Santa Maria de Capite Vigle. Mor. II, 481, Aug. 1206.

²⁹Mor. II, no. 661, March 1232. The Venetian church to which San Nicolò owed allegiance was not mentioned in the document, but because San Marco, similarly, was labeled “San Marco of the Embolo,” I surmise that San Nicolò, like San Marco, was subject to the Venetian abbot of San Giorgio Maggiore. Janin, “Les sanctuaires des colonies latins,” 170–71.

³⁰R. Janin, “Les sanctuaires de Byzance sous la domination latin,” *EtByz* 2 (1944), 139–51, 174–76; *idem*, *Géographie ecclésiastique*, 44–45, 514, and map; Wolff, “Politics in the Latin Patriarchate,” 234–35; Mor. II, no. 527; Dandolo, *Chronicon*, 289; Brown, “Venetian Quarter,” 78–80. These religious institutions did not become part of the Venetian Embolo.

³¹T. & T. II, 4–11. This edition gives the date 1206, which is, according to the *modo veneto* (m.v.), when the year began March 1. According to our calendar, the date is 1207. This document gives the exact geographical description of the patriarchal property in Constantinople, both within and without the walls of the city. It seems to be considerably greater than the embolo granted by Alexius in 1082. (See Mor. II, no. 470.) The 1207 document was copied in Constantinople for the patriarch of Venice, by his agent, Ado, priest of Grado and canon of the church of San Akindynos in Constantinople. For the increased Venetian holdings in Romania after 1204, see also Jacoby, “Venetian Presence,” 153.

³²Corner, *Eccl. Ven.* VIII, 232; W. Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant au Moyen Age* (Leipzig, 1923), 301; Brown, “Venetian Quarter,” 79.

tery of San Giorgio Maggiore fishing rights on the Golden Horn near the tower of Blachernae Palace in 1208. These rights included the land on the shore for sinking pilings and tying up and loading and unloading fishing boats.³³ The *podestà* Iacopo Tiepolo built a fine new *fondaco* in the Embolo about 1220.³⁴ Conon de Bethune confirmed Venetian rights in 1219 as did Robert of Courtenay in 1221.³⁵ The campi, which the Latins had held in the environs of Constantinople before the Fourth Crusade, were confirmed to Venice by the Latin emperor in 1223; and Venice also received the campi of the Provençals and the Spaniards in 1224.³⁶ Venetian rights and its possession of the arsenal in Constantinople were confirmed by John of Brienne in 1231.³⁷

The doge and council of Venice appointed a *podestà* biennially after 1207 to govern the Embolo and direct their interests in Constantinople.³⁸ As Enrico Dandolo had negotiated in 1204 and as confirmed by Marino Zeno, the Venetian *podestà* dealt with the Latin emperor as an equal. All military decisions in Constantinople were decided jointly by the *podestà* and emperor, assisted by the emperor's barons and the *podestà*'s council. The *podestà* was assisted by six councilors, six judges, and two chamberlains. He was waited on by twenty servants and possessed eleven horses. He was the highest-ranking Venetian official in political and judicial matters in Romania.³⁹

The land and the ecclesiastical structures in the Embolo, but not the secular buildings, belonged to the Venetian church. The patriarch of Grado, living in Venice, held authority over the churches in the city of Venice and its dependencies, including those in the Greek East.⁴⁰ Two monasteries on the lagoons, San Giorgio Maggiore and Sancti Felice e Fortunato di Ammiana, also possessed some property in Constantinople. The churches in the Embolo were *never* under the authority of the *Latin* patriarch of Constantinople.⁴¹

³³T. & T. II, 47–49; Corner, *Eccl. Ven.* VIII, 232–33. The T. & T. edition gives the date February 1207, m.v. See above, note 31.

³⁴The original grant of 1220 was reconfirmed in 1256. *Cod. Dip. Ven.*, ann. 1219–21, June 1220, Constantinople; T. & T. II, 9; Heyd, *Histoire*, 301.

³⁵T. & T. II, 214–15, 227–30, 253–54.

³⁶T. & T. II, 253–54; Dandolo, *Chronicon*, 290. For an interpretation of “campi,” meaning quarters of the city or fields, see Wolff, “Politics in the Latin Patriarchate,” 270.

³⁷T. & T. II, 277–98. This is the only notice of a Venetian arsenal in Constantinople during the Latin Empire. Cf. Heyd, *Histoire*, 286.

³⁸The first *podestà*, Marino Zeno, was chosen in 1205 by Venetians in Constantinople immediately after the death of Doge Enrico Dandolo. All subsequent *podestàs* were sent from Venice. R. L. Wolff, “A New Document from the Period of the Latin Empire of Constantinople: The Oath of the Venetian Podestà,” *AIPHOS* 12 (1952), 539–73; Jacoby, “Venetian Presence,” 146–49.

³⁹Wolff, “Oath of the Venetian Podestà,” presents an extended analysis of this office; see especially pp. 554–56, and Heyd, *Histoire*, 287–88.

⁴⁰In May 1205 the first *Latin* patriarch of Constantinople, the Venetian Tommaso Morosini, confirmed to the patriarch of Grado, Benedetto Falier, all rights over the churches that Venice previously had held in Constantinople or elsewhere in Romania. Corner, *Eccl. Ven.* VIII, 230; Wolff, “Politics in the Latin Patriarchate,” 234–35; also in idem, “The Organization of the Latin Patriarchate of Constantinople, 1204–1261,” *Traditio* 6 (1945), 41. The patriarch of Grado had sent his agent to Constantinople to inquire after these properties as early as March 1205. Mor. II, no. 470. The Latin patriarch of Constantinople again confirmed to the patriarch of Grado his rights in Romania in January 1221, as did Pope Alexander IV in July 1256. For January 1221, T. & T. II, 225–26; for July 1256, T. & T. III, 16–18.

⁴¹One should distinguish between the Latin patriarch of Constantinople and the patriarch of Grado. Both men were Venetian citizens. The title “patriarch of Grado” had been held by the metropolitan of the churches on the Venetian lagoons and its dependencies since the late sixth century. The title “patriarch of Constantinople” was created by the crusaders and Venetians in their agreement of March 1204. He had

Venetian ecclesiastics had held these properties in Constantinople for a century before the Fourth Crusade. The patriarch of Grado controlled the principal Venetian church in the Embolo, San Akindynos, in the twelfth century.⁴² This church controlled a mill, oven, taverns, and the shore area. The Venetian weights and measures for wine, oil, and honey were kept in San Akindynos. From these properties the patriarch of Grado had collected considerable rents in the twelfth century.⁴³ The monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore had received, from Doge Vitale Falier in 1090, lands and buildings in Constantinople which had been granted the doge by Emperor Alexius I. These stretched from the Porta Vigla to the Porta Peramatis, and included storehouses⁴⁴ next to the Porta Vigla and three shops. At this time the doge reserved for himself the great port.⁴⁵ In the twelfth century, San Giorgio Maggiore also had jurisdiction over the church of San Marco of the Embolo.⁴⁶ The church of Santa Maria of the Embolo in the thirteenth century was under the jurisdiction of the Venetian monastery of Sancti Felice e Fortunato di Ammiana, dependent on the Venetian bishop of Torcello.⁴⁷

Within Constantinople's Venetian Embolo, where the patriarch of Grado and the Venetian monasteries held the land, most secular buildings on the land were owned by private individuals, although the church held a few buildings as rental properties. It was in the Embolo that Venetian businessmen resided and conducted their business. Here they had their *fondaco*; here their law prevailed; here they bought, sold, and rented buildings.

Thirty-four real estate contracts survive from Venetian business in Constantinople during the Latin Empire. Of these, five contracts recorded sales of buildings and twenty-nine contracts recorded rents for lands or structures in the city. The Venetian church continued, after 1204, to hold all the land in the Embolo that it had held before 1204. No land within the Embolo was sold during the Latin Empire. The sole surviving Venetian

jurisdiction over those churches in the lands of Romania that the westerners gained during the Fourth Crusade. The thirteenth-century Roman pontiffs considered the Latin patriarchs to be subject to their authority and attempted to control their actions. The title "patriarch of Grado" was changed to "patriarch of Venice" in 1451. H. Kretschmayr, *Geschichte von Venedig*, I (Gotha 1905; repr. Stuttgart, 1964), 402; Wolff, "Politics in the Latin Patriarchate," 327–25; and idem, "Organization of the Latin Patriarchate," 33–60.

⁴²The priest of San Akindynos swore an oath of loyalty to the patriarch of Grado in 1250. T. & T. II, 449–50.

⁴³Heyd, *Histoire*, 260. In 1175 his agent was instructed to collect 150 libre denariorum veronese from these properties in Constantinople. *Documenti del commercio veneziano nei secoli XI–XIII*, vol. I, Documenti e studi per la storia del commercio e del diritto commerciale italiano 19, ed. R. Morozzo della Rocca and A. Lombardo (Turin, 1940), no. 245 (hereafter cited as Mor. I).

⁴⁴*Copiglia* = storehouses, or "giaveta" in Giuseppe Boerio, *Dizionario del dialetto veneziano* (Venice, 1856; repr. Venice, 1973), appendix: "Indice Italiano-Veneto del Dizionario del Dialetto Veneziano," 32.

⁴⁵July 1090. For the grant by Venetian doge Vitale Falier, see T. & T. I, 55–63; Heyd, *Histoire*, 247–75. The port is called "schala maiore." The Venetian word *scala* means port. Boerio, *Dizionario*, 614.

⁴⁶San Giorgio Maggiore received confirmation of these rights in Constantinople from the doge in July 1206, from the Venetian *podestà* of Constantinople in February 1208, from Gregory IX in 1229, and from Pope Innocent IV in January 1244. Corner, *Eccl. Ven.* VIII, 231–32, 244–45, 158–59; T. & T. II, 170–72. Upon assuming office in May 1229, Doge Iacopo Tiepolo asked the Venetian *podestà* of Constantinople to restore rents and mansions in Constantinople to San Giorgio Maggiore that had been confiscated by the commune at the time of his predecessor, Doge Pietro Ziani. Doge Ranieri Zeno confirmed the possessions of San Giorgio Maggiore in Constantinople in 1256. Corner, *Eccl. Ven.* VIII, 149–50.

⁴⁷Janin, "Les sanctuaires des colonies latines," 169–70; for the monastery, L. Lanfranchi and G. G. Zille, "Il Territorio del ducato veneziano dall'VIII al XII secolo," *Storia di Venezia*, II: *Dalle Origini del ducato alla IV crociata* (Venice, 1958), 24.

document from this period that recorded the sale of land outside the Embolo concerned land and buildings near the church of the Holy Apostles. A Venetian, Pietro Bernardo, sold two parts of this small holding to the church of the Holy Apostles, with its provost, Lord Jacobo, acting for the church. The purchase price was 4 hyperpera and the date 1210.⁴⁸ The other four sales contracts involved buildings on lands held by the patriarch of Grado. A wooden “mansion” sold for 70 hyperpera in 1207, another sold in 1208, a stone “mansion” was put up for sale in 1232, and a building was sold for 24 hyperpera in 1252.⁴⁹ The names of ten Venetians who owned buildings in the Embolo have survived.⁵⁰ Non-Venetians possessed several buildings and a shop, or leased land from the patriarch of Grado.⁵¹ Greeks held property in the city.⁵²

Contracts specifying lands rented from the patriarch of Grado survive in greater numbers than contracts of sales. Private individuals who owned buildings on church lands in the Embolo owed rents to the church for the lands under their buildings. These men were sometimes empowered to build additional buildings or to rent out the buildings. The parcels of land on which the buildings stood were surprisingly small. The average size of a parcel of land was only 384½ U.S. square feet.⁵³ The average width was 15

⁴⁸Mor. II, no. 527. This is the only surviving record of Venetian *land* sold by a private citizen during the Latin Empire. The great Byzantine church of the Holy Apostles, first built by Constantine, restored by Justinian and Theodora, and again by Basil I, was occupied by the Latins from 1205 to 1261. It housed a chapter of canons. Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique*, 42–46.

⁴⁹For 1207, Mor. II, no. 492; T. & T. II, 7. For 1208, Archivio Storico di Venezia, Mensa Patriarcale B. 9, c. 20, March 1208, Constantinople, Register. For 1232, Mor. II, no. 661. For 1252, ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 33, May 1252, Constantinople, Register. A fifth real estate sale was mentioned by Jacoby, “Venetian Presence,” 186–87, but I have not seen the text.

⁵⁰The following Venetians owned structures in Constantinople during the Latin Empire: Iohanne Bono, the agent of the patriarch of Grado in 1207, Mor. II, no. 492 and T. & T. II, 43–45; Paulo Istrigo and Michael Venier in 1207, Mor. II, no. 492; Marino Tiepolo in 1208, Corner, *Eccl. Ven.* VIII, 232–33 (the date is February 1207 m.v., which should read 1208); Zacharia Stagnario owned land and buildings in 1219, Mor. II, no. 585; Iacopo Gradenigo of San Iohannis de Rialto died intestate in 1222 and left properties in Gallipoli, Constantinople, and throughout Romania in 1222, T. & T. II, 249–50; Raimundo Bello left a palace and garden and courtyard in Constantinople to his widow Rosa, whose possession was challenged by the agent of the patriarch of Grado in April 1240, ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 29, Register, and Ch. A. Maltézou, “Il Quartiere veneziano di Constantinopoli,” *Thesaurismata* 15 (1978), no. 42; Heirs of Stephanus de Tumba and Johannes Ferro owned edifices in the city in April 1255, T. & T. II, 493–95; Pangrazio Barozzi had purchased a home and owned a “mansion” in March 1208, ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 20, and Maltézou, “Quartiere veneziano,” no. 31.

⁵¹In 1206 Ugolino of Parma built a wooden structure and Donato Gualla had a building, Mor. II, no. 481; Paolo Lombardo had a shop in 1208, Mor. II, no. 502; in 1207 Alexius and Theodore Doracinic, residents of Constantinople, leased land from the church (bordering the property of Henry the German) on which they had mansions that they rented out, T. & T. II, 52–53; in May 1211, Conon de Bethune had holdings in the Embolo, ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 21, and Maltézou, “Quartiere veneziano,” no. 34; in 1234 Basilius Sulimano leased lands owned by the Venetian patriarch of Grado that bordered lands of Constantino Adrino, Mor. II, no. 691; Marco Capselario owned an edifice in May 1252, ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 33, and Maltézou, “Quartiere veneziano,” no. 47; in 1255 the Monemvasiote Demetris Sisulmani owned a building, as did Vitali Bugari, T. & T. II, 493–96.

⁵²Maltézou, “Quartiere veneziano,” 40, 57–61, has assembled a list of all the individuals with real estate interests in Constantinople from 1156 to 1255. She also lists ten individuals with typical Greek names renting land in the Embolo.

⁵³Dimensions were given in the documents in Venetian feet. One Venetian foot = 1.12 feet U.S. (or 1' 2"). J. E. Dotson, *Merchant Culture in Fourteenth-Century Venice: Zibaldone da Canal* (Binghamton, N.Y., 1994), appendix, p. 203.

feet and the length 24½ feet.⁵⁴ The buildings upon these lands were designated as houses,⁵⁵ structures,⁵⁶ wooden building under construction,⁵⁷ “mansion,”⁵⁸ “mansion” being built of wood,⁵⁹ stone “mansion,”⁶⁰ or shop.⁶¹ Leases usually ran for twenty-nine years.⁶²

In these rental contracts from the period of the Latin Empire, the patriarch of Grado was represented in Constantinople by an agent, sometimes designated as procurator. These agents were usually Venetian laymen residing in Constantinople, and often blood relatives of the patriarch.⁶³ In March 1206 and again in spring 1255, however, the patriarch of Grado employed a priest of Grado as his agent in Constantinople.⁶⁴ These patriarchal agents received full powers from the patriarch to carry out all his business in Constantinople. These powers included leasing patriarchal lands in Constantinople, collecting the rents, and commissioning merchants to forward the proceeds to Venice.⁶⁵ One agent of the patriarch, Pangrazio Barozzi of San Moyse, owned a “mansion” in Constantinople in March 1208.⁶⁶ Another patriarchal agent, Giovanni Bono, both purchased a wooden “mansion” in the Embolo and paid rent to the patriarch of 10 hyperpera in 1207.⁶⁷ The employ of a cleric rather than a layman as his agent in 1255 suggests that the patriarch may have been unable to find a trustworthy lay merchant in the city in the last decade of the Latin Empire.

Commercial uses of these Constantinopolitan properties were mentioned infrequently. A shop in the parish of San Akindynos yielded an annual rent of 6 hyperpera in

⁵⁴Mor. II, nos. 481, 691; T. & T. II, 43–45, 59–61.

⁵⁵*Case*, T. & T. II, 4–11, 270–72; Mor. II, no. 470.

⁵⁶*Edificio*, Mor. II, no. 481; T. & T. II, 495–96.

⁵⁷*Fabricam ligneam*, Mor. II, no. 481.

⁵⁸*Mansiones*, T. & T. II, 43–45, 52–54, 59–61, 270–72; Mor. II, no. 492.

⁵⁹*Mansione fabrica lignea*, Mor. II, no. 492.

⁶⁰*Mansionem petrineam*, Mor. II, no. 661.

⁶¹*Ergasteria*, T. & T. II, 59–61; Mor. II, nos. 470, 502. *Argasterum* = workshop, small shop, stall. A. P. Kazhdan and A. W. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley, Calif., 1985), 22, and T. & T. I, 50 n. 4. Venetian shops in the Embolo dated from the chrysobull of Alexius I Comnenus of 1082. T. & T. I, 50; see also Brown, “Venetian Quarter,” 75.

⁶²For rental or land lease contracts for twenty-nine years: in 1206, T. & T. II, 43–45; in 1207, *ibid*, 52–54; in 1208, Mor. II, no. 502; in 1234, Mor. II, no. 691; in 1255, T. & T. II, 492–96; but Ugolino da Parma leased land from the church for ten years, Aug. 1206, Constantinople, Mor. II, no. 481.

⁶³Giovanni Bono of Santa Maria Formosa, procurator for Benedetto Falier, patriarch of Grado, Sept. and Oct. 1206, ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 12, 13, Register; Pangrazio Barozzi of San Moyse for Angelo Barozzi, patriarch of Grado, Aug. 1207, T. & T. II, 59, and 1207, ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 17, 18, 19, Register; 1208, ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 20, Register, and Mor. II, no. 502; Tribuno Barozzi, brother and procurator for Angelo Barozzi, patriarch of Grado, Aug. 1219 and Feb. 1225, ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 22, 24, 25, Register; Pietro Bragadin, son of late Andrea di San Geminiano, procurator for Angelo Barozzi, patriarch of Grado, Jan. 1234, ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 26, Register; Angelo Barozzi, procurator for Angelo Barozzi, patriarch of Grado, Nov. 1234, Mor. II, no. 691; Giberto Querini, brother and procurator for Leonardo Querini, patriarch of Grado, March 1240, April 1240, May 1240, Sept. 1240, Feb. 1241, Jan. 1242, ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, Register.

⁶⁴Ado, priest of Grado, agent of Benedetto Falier, patriarch of Grado, March 1205, Mor. II, no. 470; Henricus, archpriest of the church of Grado, for Jacobo Belligno, patriarch of Grado, March, April, and June 1255, T. & T. II, 492–96.

⁶⁵Mor. II, nos. 470, 492.

⁶⁶ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 20, Register.

⁶⁷Mor. II, no. 492; T. & T. II, 6.

1208.⁶⁸ Another shop in the Embolo appeared in a document of 1225.⁶⁹ The shops in Constantinople in the Embolo probably functioned similarly to those on the Rialto. These would be rented out to tradesmen on an annual basis, and the rents provided regular income to the Venetian churches that owned the land and the buildings. The renters were not always Venetian.⁷⁰ Benedictus de Salmaza, resident in Constantinople, obtained in 1206 the right to set up moneychanging tables in the structures he intended to build on lands in Constantinople rented from the patriarch of Grado.⁷¹ The Commune of Venice paid an annual rent of 20 hyperpera to the patriarch of Grado for the land under the *fondaco* built by *podestà* Tiepolo in 1220. Commercial fishing was controlled by the Venetian monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore.⁷²

A long list of tenants and land rents of properties in Constantinople survives in the grant made by the Venetian *podestà* of Constantinople to the patriarch of Grado in 1207. Seventy-eight names appear, most of whom cannot be identified as Venetian.⁷³ Five were Venetian noblemen.⁷⁴ The majority of these tenants paid rents under 10 hyperpera, with twenty-seven owing rents of 1 or 2 hyperpera. Ten individuals paid rents of more than 10 hyperpera annually.⁷⁵

Other evidence shows that Constantinopolitan real estate became less profitable in the Latin Empire. Real estate contracts sometimes referred to "vacant land" on which an individual might construct new buildings for his own use.⁷⁶ By April 1240, six individuals were constructing buildings on patriarchal land in Constantinople.⁷⁷ The existence of vacant land may indicate a weak demand for land in the city. It is not strange that land was vacant in Constantinople, since the fires during the Latin conquest of 1203–4 destroyed one-sixth of the city.⁷⁸ Furthermore, property holding was so unsafe in the Embolo that the patriarch inserted a clause in rental contracts that excused rents if the houses on the land were damaged by "fire or violence of great men."⁷⁹ Possibly additional fires threatened the city even after the conquest.⁸⁰ Disorder and insecure real estate possession is evidenced when Doge Iacopo Tiepolo ordered land and rent receipts in Constantinople to be restored to the monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore in 1229. The *podestà*

⁶⁸Mor. II, no. 502.

⁶⁹ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 24, and Maltézou, "Quartiere veneziano," no. 37.

⁷⁰T. & T. I, 52; Mor. I, no. 245; and Mor. II, no. 502.

⁷¹T. & T. II, 43–45.

⁷²See above, notes 33 and 34.

⁷³T. & T. II, 4–11; Brown, "Venetian Quarter," 77; Maltézou, "Quartiere veneziano," 40. Jacoby, "Venetian Presence," 185 n. 151, disputes the 1207 date for this list of rents, suggesting that part survives from 1240.

⁷⁴Ibid. They are Vitalis Venier, Johannes Bono, Pascalis Bollani, Georgius Signolo, and Stephanus da Tumba.

⁷⁵This author is preparing an additional study comparing the rents due the patriarch of Grado over the years from these lands in Constantinople.

⁷⁶*Terra vacua*, Mor. II, no. 492; T. & T. II, 43–45; 270–72; ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 28, March 1240, Register, and Maltézou, "Quartiere veneziano," no. 41; rights to build and rebuild, T. & T. II, 43–45.

⁷⁷*Fabrica* = a building under construction. ASV, Mens. Patr. B. 9, c. 20, April 30, 1240, Register; Maltézou, "Quartiere veneziano," no. 42.

⁷⁸Th. F. Madden, "The Fires of the Fourth Crusade in Constantinople, 1203–4," *BZ* 84/85 (1991–92), 89; Talbot, "Restoration," 243–45.

⁷⁹*Excepto periculo incendii et violentia seniores*, T. & T. II, 43–44, 52–54, 59–61, 495–96; Mor. II, no. 691. *Excepto incendio et publica violentia*, T. & T. II, 492–96.

⁸⁰See above, note 22.

Theophilo Zeno had confiscated these properties from the monastery on the orders of the previous doge, Pietro Ziani, between 1224 and 1228.⁸¹ If property was not safe from confiscation in Constantinople, even when held by the church, the foundation of a strong economy would be questionable.

Large structures in Constantinople were no longer desired by Venetians in the latter years of the Latin Empire. In 1232 a wealthy Venetian ordered, in his will, that his stone "mansion" in Constantinople be sold.⁸² The church of San Marco of the Embolo seems to have been abandoned by 1244, because in that year the religious and legal functions of that church were assigned to the Venetian archbishop of Heraclea on the Sea of Marmara by San Giorgio Maggiore. This suggests that no clergy remained in San Marco of the Embolo to serve its parish.⁸³ The same document mentions a monastery in the Embolo, identified as Christos Pantepoptes, which was also abandoned by the Latins.⁸⁴ By August 17, 1256, certain possessions of the Venetian monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore had been sacked or damaged in such a way that they no longer yielded revenue.⁸⁵ This suggests increased criminal activity in Constantinople. All these details demonstrate that real estate in the Embolo became less and less profitable to the Venetians during the Latin Empire.

The reduced demand for real estate in Constantinople derived from the city's population decline under the Latins.⁸⁶ A recent study has summarized the evidence and concluded that Constantinople's population reached a peak of about 400,000 under the Comneni, but that the city held only 40,000 people in the late fourteenth century.⁸⁷ Wolff speaks of the "few miserable Latins [who] clung precariously to the depopulated capital city, at times almost cut off from food supplies" in the latter years of the Latin Empire.⁸⁸ I suggest that the city did not hold many more than 40,000 inhabitants under the Latins, due to the departure of the Greeks. If the city's population did decrease 90 percent under the Latins, this would have greatly diminished real estate values.

A second argument affirming the economic decline of Constantinople after 1223 is derived from an analysis of notarized commercial documents. From 1205 to 1223, trade by Venetians with Constantinople did flourish, if the thirty-one surviving trade documents can serve as a basis for judgment.⁸⁹ During these years Venetian businessmen brought commercial investments totaling 1,284 *libre denariorum venetialium* and 3,030

⁸¹T. & T. II, 270–72; Wolff, "Oath of the Venetian Podestà," 562.

⁸²Mor. II, no. 661.

⁸³T. & T. II, 422–23; Janin, "Les sanctuaires des colonies latine," 168. That the bishopric was Venetian appears in Wolff, "Organization of the Latin Patriarchate," 52.

⁸⁴Corner, *Eccl. Ven.* VIII, 245–46; Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique*, 514, also *idem* "Les sanctuaires des colonies latine," 175–76. See the text, T. & T. II, 422–23, which reads "monasterij patita polici & domos eorum."

⁸⁵Corner, *Eccl. Ven.* VIII, 249–50: "quod redditus ex inde habere non possunt quod habere debent . . ."

⁸⁶Talbot, "Restauration," 247–48.

⁸⁷D. Jacoby, "La population de Constantinople à l'époque byzantine: un problème de démographie urbaine," *Byzantion* 31 (1961), 81–109, esp. 103, 107.

⁸⁸Wolff, "Latin Empire," diss., 561.

⁸⁹By comparison, the most profitable period of Venetian business in Constantinople in the previous century was 1150 to 1170, from which only nineteen documents survive. Mor. I, nos. 128, 129, 130, 134, 152, 164, 172, 179, 183, 188, 189, 190, 196, 197, 198, 201, 203, 213, 235. The twenty-year period immediately before the Fourth Crusade provides only eight documents, but Venetian-Byzantine relations were troubled during these years.

hyperpera to Constantinople.⁹⁰ Large sums of money were brought to Constantinople. For example, a group of crusaders in 1204 borrowing money in Venice, with armor as collateral, agreed to repay the debt in Constantinople.⁹¹ Theodore Brana agreed in 1206 to pay the Venetians in Constantinople annually, for the city of Adrianople.⁹² The Templars borrowed 500 *libre denariorum venetialium* from Venetians, and agreed to repay in Constantinople.⁹³ Three Venetian noblemen collected rents in Lampsacus and agreed in 1211 to pay the Venetian *podestà* in Constantinople 1,000 hyperpera in three installments.⁹⁴ This flourishing Venetian business in Constantinople ceased about 1223. However, the church still had assets in Constantinople in 1231 when the prior of the Venetian church of San Nicolò in Constantinople lent money to the Latin bishop of Rodosto.⁹⁵

The overseas trading contracts were usually commenda contracts, in which the sedentary investor (*socius stans*) of the partnership gave money or goods to his traveling partner, known as a *tractans*.⁹⁶ When the traveler arrived at his destination, he would complete his business. Upon returning, he repaid the capital to the investor, and the profits of the venture were divided, three-fourths to the investor, one-fourth to the traveling partner. Venetian commenda contracts only rarely specified the type of goods that were bought and sold; none of the Constantinopolitan contracts did so. Occasionally the investor would not name a destination, but authorized his agent to travel "wherever it seemed best to him, on land or on sea."⁹⁷

Venetians stopped at other ports of call on their way to and from Constantinople before 1222. Sixteen—more than half—of the Constantinople documents specified voyages between Constantinople and Venice,⁹⁸ occasionally indicating stops in Apulia and Ancona. Venetians based in Constantinople during the Latin Empire also agreed to carry investments to other ports in Romania—to Abydos, Crete, Negroponte, and the Black Sea.⁹⁹ From Constantinople they also sailed south to Syria.¹⁰⁰ A 1217 voyage to Acre was probably related to the crusade of Damietta.¹⁰¹ Records of trading voyages from Constantinople to Alexandria in Egypt also survive from 1206 and 1207.¹⁰²

⁹⁰Mor. II, nos. 467, 478, 479, 491, 493, 515, 517, 518, 519, 520, 530, 537, 541, 566, 568, 572, 573, 582, 601, 602, 603, 662, 805; Mor. III, nos. 67, 68, 75, 80, 93; and *Cod. Dip. Ven.*, ann. 1232–33, Sept. 1233, Constantinople.

⁹¹Mor. II, no. 474.

⁹²T. & T. II, 18.

⁹³Mor. II, nos. 487, 493.

⁹⁴T. & T. II, 208–10.

⁹⁵Mor. II, no. 658. He purchased two basins of silver, two ampula, one *terribula* of silver, and two pieces of samite cloth with which to make two garments: a dalmatic and a stole.

⁹⁶For the commenda, see F. C. Lane, "Investment and Usury," in *Venice and History: The Collected Papers of Frederic C. Lane* (Baltimore, 1966), 56–68; and R. S. Lopez and I. W. Raymond, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World* (London, 1955), 174–78.

⁹⁷"ad negociandum per terram et per aquam ubicumque michi bonum visum fuerit . . .": Mor. II, no. 604. The destination of these voyages can sometimes be determined when the same factor in the same month and year made another contract for a particular destination.

⁹⁸Mor. II, nos. 467, 474, 493, 517, 519, 520, 566, 572, 573, 601, 602, 603, 805, and Mor. III, nos. 75, 80, 93.

⁹⁹For Abydos, Mor. II, no. 515; Crete, no. 518; Negroponte, nos. 530, 537, 582; Black Sea, nos. 379, 478, 541, 662.

¹⁰⁰Mor. II, nos. 487, 491, 493.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, no. 568.

¹⁰²Mor. III, nos. 67, 68.

It has been suggested that Venetian businessmen profited greatly from trade in the Black Sea after 1204, to which they had access for the first time.¹⁰³ However, the evidence is meager. The Greeks prohibited Latin shipping in the Black Sea before 1204, when Constantinople was the staple port for the entire Black Sea area, and the city's international business was tightly controlled by Byzantium.¹⁰⁴ The 1204 Treaty of Partition assigned the Black Sea area to Venice,¹⁰⁵ after which Venice shut its enemies out of the Black Sea.

During the Latin Empire, Venetian interest in the Black Sea was directed more often toward its northern coast than the southern shore. As early as 1206 Venetian merchants sent an investment of 100 hyperpera on convoy (*taxegio*)¹⁰⁶ to Soldaia in the Crimea. A commercial contract for only 16 hyperpera, for a voyage on a small ship in convoy in the Black Sea was drawn up in 1232.¹⁰⁷ Marco Polo's uncle maintained a house in Soldaia in mid-century.¹⁰⁸ John of Pian del Carpine in 1247 met three Venetian merchants in Kiev: Manuel the Venetian, Jacobus Venier of Acre, and Niccolò Pisani.¹⁰⁹ In 1253 William of Rubrouck initially traveled to the East via Constantinople, Soldaia, and Tana, possibly in a Venetian vessel.¹¹⁰ In 1258 Niccolò and Maffio Polo set out via Constantinople and Soldaia on their first trip into Asia.¹¹¹ Only one Venetian commercial contract survives to demonstrate Venetian commercial interest in the *southern* coast of the Black Sea during the Latin Empire—a 1212 commenda in a convoy for Samsun.¹¹² Then in 1261, the miscalculating *podestà* Marco Gradenigo withdrew the entire military force from Constantinople to attack the little island of Daphnusia off Anatolia. While he was absent, Nicene forces breached the walls of Constantinople and took the city.¹¹³

The northern coast of the Black Sea yielded mainly agricultural products to mer-

¹⁰³ Byzantine control over business in the Venetian Embolo in Constantinople is neatly summarized by Nicol when he discusses the Byzantine privileges granted to the Venetians. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 60–62, 80–81, 89–90.

¹⁰⁴ Constantinople had been the staple port, that is, the necessary and only legal port, for Greek merchants coming from the Black Sea. For Byzantine control of Black Sea voyages, see S. P. Karpov, *L'Impero di Trebisonda: Venezia, Genova e Roma, 1204–1461* (Roma, 1986), 73 and n. 7; G. I. Bratianu, *La mer Noire*, Societas Academica Dacoromano, Acta Historica 9 (Monachii, 1969), L. III, 175–76. The argument that Genoa was admitted to the Black Sea before 1204 is made by M. Nystazopoulou, "Venise et la mer Noire du XI^e au XV^e siècle," *Theasaurismata tou itelleenikou Institutou Vyzantineon kai Metavyzantineon Spoudeon* (1970), 16–20; see also M. Balard, "Byzance et les régions septentrionales de la mer Noire (XIII^e–XV^e siècles," *RH* 288 (1993), 26–28; Heyd, *Histoire*, 220–23.

¹⁰⁵ Bratianu, *La mer Noire*, 178.

¹⁰⁶ *Taxegio* = *tavedion* = (Greek) *taxideuein*, an armed expedition. R. S. Lopez, "Venezia e le grandi linee dell'espansione commerciale nel secolo XIII," *La Civiltà veneziana del secolo di Marco Polo* (Florence, 1955), 44.

¹⁰⁷ Mor. II, nos. 478, 479, 662.

¹⁰⁸ Heyd, *Histoire*, 300.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 297, and G. Guzman, "European Clerical Envoys to the Mongols: Report of Western Merchants in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 1231–1255," *Journal of Medieval History* 21 (1995). The author has graciously allowed me to read the manuscript.

¹¹⁰ "The Journey of William of Rubruck," ed. Ch. Dawson, in *Mission to Asia* (Toronto, 1980), 89–91. Rubrouck's meeting the Venetian Bonifacio da Molin (Molendino) in Iconium on his return home from the Mongol court does not prove Venetian interest in the Black Sea. Guzman, "European Clerical Envoys." Iconium had closer contacts with the Mediterranean than the Black Sea.

¹¹¹ Heyd, *Histoire*, 300; Bratianu, *La mer Noire*, 211.

¹¹² Mor. II, no. 541.

¹¹³ Wolff, "Latin Empire," *Crusades* II, 231–32.

chants before the Mongol conquests. Grain was the main export, but furs, honey, wax, and slaves were also exported.¹¹⁴ William of Rubrouck noted in 1253 that Soldaia exported ermine and squirrel furs south across the Black Sea to Anatolia. He also remarked that Soldaia imported cotton, silk, and spices from the Turkish south shore of the Black Sea.¹¹⁵ Only after mid-century did the Crimea and the Sea of Azov become an avenue to the Far East.¹¹⁶ The great silk road from the Crimea, the Sea of Azov, and Tana through the Mongol empire across central Asia to the Far East does not yet seem to have been used by Europeans during the Latin Empire. From the scant surviving evidence, Constantinople's imports from the Black Sea before 1261 would seem to consist mainly of grain, furs, and slaves.

Venetian business contracts between Constantinople and the Black Sea were affected by the advance of the Mongols. The commenda contracts of 1206 to Soldaia and of 1212 to Samsun (mentioned above) demonstrated business interests in the Black Sea before the appearance of the Mongols. But in 1221–22 Genghis Khan's lieutenants advanced into southern Russia, defeated the Cumans and the Rus at the Kalka River and then sacked Soldaia before returning east to Asia.¹¹⁷ Thereafter, evidence of Venetians in the Black Sea area is very thin. A decade later, in the above-mentioned contract of 1232, Venetians in convoy planned to go "into the Black Sea," the investors not specifying a definite port.¹¹⁸ Venetian business activity from Constantinople into the Black Sea area was halted temporarily during the great Mongol offensive into Europe between 1236 and 1241. But the men of the Rialto returned to the lands bordering the Black Sea after these wars ceased and the Mongols (Tatars) settled in the lands north of the sea. The Mongol offensive, however, should not be blamed for the decline of Constantinople under the Latins. As noted above, Venetian businessmen appeared in Kiev in 1247, in Soldaia (from which the elder Polos set out) in the 1250s, and a Venetian naval force sailed the Black Sea in 1261. Venetian naval expeditions into the Black Sea during the Latin Empire were mainly directed toward the protection of Constantinople, not toward the expansion of commerce.¹¹⁹ The Black Sea would not offer spectacular profits to Venetian merchants until after the fall of the Latin Empire.

I have found no Venetians drawing up commenda contracts for long-distance trade into or out of Constantinople during the latter years of the Latin Empire, from 1233 to 1261. If notarial cartularies could be recovered from Constantinople for the Latin Empire, some evidence of trade might have been recovered; but a majority of the notarial documents drawn up in thirteenth-century Venice have not survived to the twentieth century.¹²⁰ Nonetheless, the *complete* lack of any surviving documentation of Venetian

¹¹⁴ Bratianu, *La mer Noire*, 176; Nystazopoulou "Venise et la mer Noire," 16–20.

¹¹⁵ Dawson, "Rubruck," 90.

¹¹⁶ Thiriet, *Romanie vénitienne*, 100.

¹¹⁷ R. Grousset, *L'empire des Steppes*, 4th ed. (Paris, 1969), 306–8; Balard, "Byzance et les régions septentrionales," 22; Bratianu, *La mer Noire*, 198–200; D. O. Morgan, "The Mongols and the Eastern Mediterranean," *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204* (London, 1989), 198–203.

¹¹⁸ Mor. II, no. 662.

¹¹⁹ Balard, "Byzance et les régions septentrionales," 22–23, 28.

¹²⁰ Andreas Meyer, in a discussion following the presentation of his paper "Notaries in Lucca in the Thirteenth Century," given at the Twenty-ninth International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Mich., May 7, 1994, commented that, from his enumerations, only about one in one thousand private notarial

trade with Constantinople from 1233 to 1261 is suggestive. Business in Constantinople must have declined in the second quarter of the thirteenth century.

A third body of evidence pointing to the decline of the economy of Constantinople after the 1220s is to be found in Venetian government sources. In 1224 Doge Pietro Ziani and his council settled accounts for the arrears of expenses owed to two Venetian noblemen who had served as councilor and chamberlain under Marino Dandolo, *podestà* of Constantinople.¹²¹ These governmental expenses should have been paid from communal revenues in Constantinople, but, since they were not, the economy of the entire city must have been depressed.

The records of large-scale transactions in Constantinople also demonstrate the economic weakness of the city in the later years of the Latin Empire, when the Latins in Constantinople adopted increasingly desperate expedients to raise money. The barons of the Latin Empire borrowed 13,134 hyperpera from Venetians in Constantinople in 1238 on the collateral of the Crown of Thorns, the most venerated relic left in Constantinople.¹²² It was redeemed in 1239 by Louis IX (St. Louis) of France, who built Sainte-Chapelle on the Isle de la Cité in Paris as a shrine for the crown. Emperor Baldwin II and his wife had only one son and heir, whom they mortgaged, sometime before 1248, to Venetian merchants in Constantinople for 24,000 hyperpera.¹²³ By 1255, the Venetians themselves had to borrow in Thebes to outfit their fleet in Romania, when the Venetian captain of the fleet was unable to raise money in Constantinople.¹²⁴ In 1259 Doge Renier Zeno authorized the *podestà* of Constantinople, Marco Gradenigo, to borrow up to 3,000 hyperpera in the Levant from all persons, Venetians or foreigners, to purchase ships to defend Constantinople.¹²⁵ This demonstrates that the city of Constantinople was a financial drain on Venice in the 1250s.¹²⁶

Another problem for Venetian businessmen in Constantinople during the Latin Empire was that Byzantine commercial law became unenforceable after 1204.¹²⁷ Earlier, in the twelfth century, Venetian businessmen in Constantinople had been granted immunity from the *kommerkion* (a sales tax) by the Byzantine emperors. Markets in the city were intricately supervised by Greek officials enforcing laws, some dating back to the Code of Justinian.¹²⁸ After 1204 the Greeks no longer controlled Constantinople's commerce and

documents from the thirteenth century have survived to the present. Ecclesiastical documents have a slightly better survival rate.

¹²¹Cessi, "Lib. Pleg.," 9, 62. The money was owing Giovanni Michiel, and inquiry was to be made of the then current *podestà* of Constantinople, Iacopo Tiepolo, regarding whether anything was owed also to Paolo Istrigo. See also, Jacoby, "Venetian Presence," 193.

¹²²T. & T. II, 346–49. The barons commented, "We make notice . . . viewing the grave situation at present" (notum facimus universis praesentibus et futuris praesentibus seriem inspecturus).

¹²³R. L. Wolff, "Mortgage and Redemption of an Emperor's Son: Castille and the Latin Empire of Constantinople" *Speculum* 29.1 (1954), 45–84.

¹²⁴Mor. II, no. 833.

¹²⁵T. & T. III, 24–25.

¹²⁶See above, notes 11, 19, and 20.

¹²⁷After 1261 the Byzantines attempted to reestablish their regulatory apparatus for trade. Since regulations had to be reimposed, it follows that they had not been enforced prior to 1261. J. Chrysostomides, "Venetian Commercial Privileges under the Palaeologi," *Studi Veneziani* 12 (1970), 268–72; see also, Jacoby, "Venetian Presence," 157.

¹²⁸Antoniadis-Bibicou, *Recherches sur les douanes*, 49–50, 123–39, 193–216.

Latin merchants could sail directly into the Black Sea. The rigid Greek commercial regulations do not seem to have been reestablished by the Latins for the city of Constantinople, although an agreement of March 1207 between Franks and Venetians established some principles concerning theft, contract law, and judicial procedures in Romania.¹²⁹ Venice in 1206 had not yet established a system to regulate the markets in her home city on the Adriatic, much less regulating trade in Constantinople with a Venetian bureaucracy of fewer than fifteen appointed officials.¹³⁰

The preceding has presented the evidence from Venetian sources for the economic decline of Venetian business in Constantinople under the Latin Empire. (The careers of two thirteenth-century Venetian merchants, Zaccaria Stagnario and Domenico Gradenigo, both of the Venetian parish of San Giovanni Evangelista de Rialto, can also be used to illustrate that Venetian business in Constantinople peaked between 1206 and 1219, but then declined.)¹³¹ In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the city of Constantinople declined as a business center during the second quarter of the thirteenth century. It has been shown that Venetians profited from business in Constantinople only in the first twenty years of the Latin Empire. Thereafter evidence of trade between Venice and Constantinople is lacking. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the lands of the Embolo held by Venetian churches and monasteries became less profitable after the 1220s. Land was empty, Venetian ecclesiastical property was confiscated by the *podestà*, and churches were closed. Crimes against real estate grew more prevalent. Latin mercenaries deserted Constantinople, and the city experienced famines. Furthermore, the credit of the Latin Empire was poor. The Latin emperor borrowed huge sums from the Venetians to pay his day-to-day expenses. In the 1250s, Venetian *podestà* and fleet captains in Constantinople were not financed from Italy but borrowed from wherever they could to maintain their fleets. These symptoms of decline describe the Constantinopolitan economy under the Latins after 1223.

University of Missouri, St. Louis

¹²⁹T. & T. II, 49–52. Wharf taxes, customs, and sales taxes were “privatized” under Latin rule. Also, in the countryside, Byzantine dues for lands and services continued to be collected, albeit privately. Jacoby, “Venetian Presence,” 197, and idem, “From Byzantium to Latin Romania: Continuity and Change,” *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, ed. B. Arbel, B. Hamilton, and D. Jacoby (London, 1989), 17–18.

¹³⁰For the growing Venetian regulation of commerce in Italy in the thirteenth century, see G. Röscher, *Venedig und das Reich* (Tübingen, 1982), passim, esp. 178–79.

¹³¹For a discussion of Stagnario and Gradenigo, see my “Domenico Gradenigo, a Thirteenth-Century Venetian Merchant and His Family,” forthcoming in a Festschrift for Donald E. Queller, edited by Thomas F. Madden.